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Photo: Ray Archer





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Grand Prix of Mexico MX2 Winner  
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A photograph of a motorcycle crash on a racetrack. The motorcycle is lying on its side on the asphalt, with its front wheel pointing towards the left. The rider is wearing a yellow and black patterned suit. In the background, there is a green grassy area and a yellow and red striped barrier. A large black circular overlay is positioned on the right side of the image, containing the title and text.

# PICKING UP...

Three days, hours of travel and more set-up work with the factory Ducati in Argentina ultimately lasted a few seconds for Jorge Lorenzo with this spectacular first-corner spill at Termas de Rio Honda. Andrea Iannone was again at the heart of talking points in South America

**Photo by Ducati Corse Press/Milagro**



# HIGH FLYER

After causing a stir in Argentina Red Bull KTM's Jorge Prado struggled to make a similar impression in Mexico but not through a lack of effort or the sixteen year old's propensity to gain style marks. Two decent tracks – Pietramurata and the Eurocircuit – for the Spaniard lie ahead in MXGP

Photo by Ray Archer









# SEEING RED?

Eli Tomac wants to double-check that he actually now heads the 2017 AMA 450SX series after his second place in Seattle and after having eaten a 29 point deficit to Ryan Dungey. Three tense rounds remain

Photo by Cudby/Shepherd











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# GRAND PRIX OF ARGENTINA

TERMAS DE RIO HONDO • APRIL 9th

MotoGP winner: Maverick Viñales, Yamaha

Moto2 winner: Franco Morbidelli, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Joan Mir, Honda

# 100%







MotoGP ARG

By Neil Morrison  
Blog by David Emmett



**T**wo races down, and this is all going rather well for Yamaha. Two wins, a further two podiums and two rookie satellite riders that appear well equipped to rattle the cages of some of the established names.

For the second race running, Maverick Viñales confirmed his status among the sport's elite with another measured ride to leave northern Argentina with a 14-point championship lead. 'Mature like 30 years old,' crew chief Ramon Forcada wrote on Sunday evening, referencing his rider's refusal to feel flustered in the early laps, when Marc Marquez jumped out of the blocks like the proverbial scalded cat. Fast in every condition he's ridden in, Viñales and the 2017 Yamaha M1 are as adaptable as they are quick.

It was all quite a contrast to Marquez, who reverted to a 'win-at-all-costs' approach on Sunday, and crashed out of the lead four laps in. The fast and bumpy 2.9-mile Termas de Rio Hondo layout showed that Honda's RC213V remains as difficult to manhandle as years gone by, with Marquez, Dani Pedrosa and Cal Crutchlow complaining of the bike's inclination to wheelie, spin and float, all in one turn.

This was not just an issue of acceleration, as witnessed in Qatar. The Honda riders were often seen manhandling the machine over the ever worsening bumps. 'As I've said time and time again, the riders are overcompensating for the situation,' said Crutchlow, who eventually finished third, a place behind Valentino Rossi.

On this evidence, it's clear the Yamaha M1 is once again a step ahead of the rest. Blessed with a high top speed and fantastic ability to grip and drive out of corners, it appears to be an all-round package. 'If you put Zarco or Folger on our bike they'd be down the back with Tito [Rabat],' said Crutchlow, whose own hopes of victory were derailed by a mystery mechanical issue that he refused to divulge.

And while still at an early stage, it will be interesting to see how Marquez reacts to his 37-point deficit – a championship disadvantage he has never overcome on a bike that retains many of its predecessor's flaws. For in Viñales there appears to be a competitor that will not get ruffled. Marquez's conservative approach of collecting fourth places in 2016 worked knowing he had a comfortable lead in the standings to defend. Now he must expertly choose when to attack, knowing full well that Sunday's end result ranks as a possible consequence.

Oh, and there isn't just one rider to overcome either. Having languished behind in free practice in Qatar and Argentina, Valentino Rossi still found the necessary magic to take two podiums on both Sundays. Just think how fast he'll be when he feels fully comfortable with the front end of the much-revised M1. Two races have displayed how good it is. And watching Marquez try and peg them back will be a sight to behold.





MotoGP ARG



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SEMPRE IN CAMMINO









Dovizioso had better attempt the 2018 edition of the Grand Prix in South America while looking over his shoulder. For the second year in a row he was punted out of the running; this time it was Aleix Espargaro who was the villain



Two out of two for Franco Morbidelli...but his teammate offered a close chase this time

MotoGP ARG







Pedrosa lost out on the chance  
of a third podium in four races  
in Argentina







# ROSSI: THE DEVOURER OF STATS

When Valentino Rossi crossed the finish line at the Termas De Rio Hondo circuit on Sunday he completed his 350th Grand Prix. That is a truly astonishing statistic: It means he has spent approximately 245 hours, or 10 days and 5 hours of his life aboard a Grand Prix motorcycle. According to the exhaustive and authoritative motorsports database Forix, he has completed a grand total of 37,738 kilometres on 125s, 250s, 500s, and MotoGP machines, 8944 kilometres of which in the lead.

To put that into a more understandable context, here's what those numbers mean in real terms:

- 37,738 kilometres is just 2,337 short of a complete circumference of the earth. In roughly 20 races time, barring crashes or DNFs, Rossi will have racked enough kilometres to have travelled the entire length of the Equator. So at either Jerez, Le Mans or Mugello next year, Rossi will complete a full racing lap of the planet.

- Rossi has spent 8,944 of those 37,738 kilometres leading those races. Put another way, he has

spent 23.7% of his racing distance in the lead.

- 8,944 kilometres is roughly from his home in Tavullia to Shanghai in China as the crow flies. It is from Tavullia to the Gobi Desert in Mongolia by motorcycle, or all the way from Tavullia to the northernmost point in Europe, the Nordkapp and back, by way of the Nürburgring.

It isn't just the distances which are mind boggling. Rossi's 350 Grand Prix starts are more than any other rider in history. Second behind Rossi is Loris Capi-

rossi, with 328, and behind Capirossi, Jack Findlay with a total of 282 starts. (Findlay's numbers are made more impressive by the fact that he often raced twice on the same day, in the 350 and 500 classes, as was common practice in the 1960s and 1970s.) Rossi's numbers are all the more remarkable because he has converted so many of those starts into podiums. Of the 350 he has ended up on the podium 223 times (63.7%), and 114 of those times on the top step (32.6%).

But what truly marks Valentino Rossi out from the rest is the fact that he is still competitive at this stage of his career. When Capirossi retired, he hadn't been on the podium for three seasons, and it had been four years since he had won a race. Rossi's last win was at Barcelona last year, and his last podium was, well, at his 350th race. He is second in the championship behind his teammate Maverick Viñales, a position he has finished in for the past three seasons in a row.



By David Emmett



How does he do it? That is the real mystery behind Rossi's success. The commitment required to remain competitive is immense at any age, meaning hours of training in the gym, and riding bikes, and pushing to the limit for hour after hour during testing and practice. It means endless hours of frustration waiting around while mechanics and engineers pore over problems, looking for solutions. It means endless hours of even greater frustration wondering why you weren't as fast as the guy who won. It requires a burning ambition to do anything and everything it takes to win. When you're 38 years of age, with nine world championship titles, a small warehouse full of silverware, untold millions in the bank, and the pick of any attractive partner of your choice across several continents, what motivation is there?

The will to win, apparently. It is obvious in everything Rossi does that he still loves riding motorcycles, and racing motorcycles, but above all, he loves winning. He consistently refers to "the taste" of winning, something which

is profoundly visceral to him, a physical sensation. That feeling is so addictive that many who compete succumb to it, yet Rossi finds a way to stay competitive, to keep winning. Earlier this year, he said he never started each season thinking about winning the championship, but only focusing on each race, and trying to win that. Race by race, he works his way towards a title.

To keep himself fresh, he spends all his time training with the youngsters of the VR46 Riders Academy. By surrounding himself with kids of 16, 18, 20 years of age, he feeds off their energy, and rejuvenates himself. Riding against them he learns the new tricks young riders keep inventing, and adapts his own riding to take on the youngsters who now challenge him. Spanish nobleman Ponce de Leon went searching for the fountain of youth in America, and found Florida. Valentino Rossi found it in his back yard, at The Ranch dirt track facility he had built near his home.

Can Rossi win another title? He faces an uphill task, just as he has done since he returned to Yamaha. The young upstarts who came to supplant him in 2006 and 2008 are now grizzled veterans themselves, and have had younger riders still come to challenge them. New teammate Maverick Viñales has looked invincible since walking into the Movistar Yamaha garage, and Rossi is yet to beat him. Marc Márquez is reigning champion, and will put up a stout defence of his title once Honda sort out the electronics. Dani Pedrosa still lurks in the wings. Jorge Lorenzo may be temporarily incapacitated as he adapts to the Ducati, but if he manages that, will once again be a fearsome foe. Then there are the others, the wildcards, the Cal Crutchlows and Andrea Dovizioso of this world.

Winning a tenth Grand Prix title is an enormous challenge for Valentino Rossi, and he faces unparalleled obstacles along the way. Despite this, one thing we know. You can never, ever count him out. Nothing is impossible.





No third victory from Pole for Marquez in what was the fourth running of the Grand Prix at Termas de Rio Hondo







# THE HIGHWAY?

Teenagers. Strange creatures for the most part. Any parent will tell you managing them can be a challenge. And many of the paddock's teams have different means of staying on top of those raging hormones and impulsive acts. For the most part Aki Ajo has it down to a fine art. And the Monlau Estrella Galicia set-up is similar in some ways, wherein riders must comply with a rigid structure and training regimen to become accustomed to the rigors and expectations seen at the highest level of the sport.

For Monlau, its roll call of riders speaks for itself: Miguel Oliveira, Alex Rins, Jorge Navarro have all passed through their ranks, while Alex Marquez's 2014 world crown bears testament to their expertise. Watched over by Emilio Alzamora, manager of Marc Marquez, the know-how is certainly in place to extract one's potential, no matter how young the rider or brazen the attitude.

Interesting then, to observe the current predicament of Italian wonder-kid Enea Bastianini. Many believed 2017 would be

his year. He has the bike. He has the team. And now he has the experience. So why, beginning his fourth grand prix campaign, is the 19 year old, so far off Moto3's top ten, let alone the front of the field, a place that talent and recent history dictates he should rightfully expect to be? Two races in and a title challenge already seems a long way off. Bastianini has yet to register a world championship point, appearing lost, unfocussed and forlorn, while Joan Mir and John McPhee – using the same factory supported Honda NS-F250Rs – set about the season's

opening act with the kind of vigour that speaks of a winter's worth of honing physical and mental focus.

The success of Honda riders in the opening two races is just one aspect that makes Bastianini's current malaise all the more trifling. After all, he finally got the move he wanted at the end of last year, having angled for a switch to Alzamora's Estrella Galicia squad in the autumn of 2015, only for his previous employer, Fausto Gresini, to wave a contract bearing his name to remind him he was going nowhere.

Now he's here and it's impossible to shake off the feeling that things have already turned sour behind the garage door and in Argentina it seemed there was more at play, especially with rumours circulating that an ultimatum had already been issued in his direction.

One factor appears to stem from Bastianini's refusal to adapt to Monlau's strict scheduling and



By Neil Morrison



training programme. The team, that employs riders from the age of twelve to compete in Spanish junior categories right the way through to the junior class, has a detailed working method that it requires its riders to fulfil. Team boss Jordi Arquer explains, 'we have one method. He has come from another team with another method. Ours includes things like what you do at home, how you organise training, and the communication you have with staff that want to help you organise this training.

'Also it's how we work at the track, outside the box. Not always, but usually before a race we give our riders a timed schedule of all the weekend. Maybe in Moto3 this isn't usual, but it's what MotoGP guys do. So we try to give a system that is as professional as possible so riders will get used to working in this way. We don't insist it's the best way. It's just our way. We try to give the method to a 12-year old kid and a 16-year old kid.' Thus Catalan teammate Aron Canet, has few issues concerning how

and when to comply, given that he has been a part of this team since his days in the FIM Junior World Championship.

But it's clear this does not work for everyone. Rins felt slighted by his treatment in 2014, feeling team-mate Alex Marquez was clearly favoured, while Navarro was another to leave for pastures new two years later, giving the impression he had never felt comfortable within Monlau's ranks. Again, in Termas de Rio Hondo, reports suggested Bastianini was distant from team members.

One is perhaps entitled to wonder whether, in these situations, a degree of flex should exist. Sure, Bastianini should pay greater attention to the new demands of the team. But should he be castigated for not adhering from the off? It's clear good management is about finding what works for your rider, even if that temporarily bends the rules of your own means and methods.

However, the reality for the Italian is that if he continues at this rate this much hyped year will be over soon after it has begun. In Alzamora, there is a figurehead convinced of his team's working methods, and one that is unlikely to flinch. A shame in some respects that we're judging kids for imperfections at an age when some of us – author included – had difficulties speaking without maintaining eye contact with our shoes. Yet this is the reality of modern racing. Long gone are the days when talent alone could win titles and there are riders at Bastianini's age willing to put the work in. Criticism must be levelled in the rider's direction too. Had he not known the means by which the team operates before pushing for the move, and the expectations that would be levelled at him?

At one time or another, every 19-year old has felt that he knows best. But for Enea, the painful truth is that there appears to be no alternative than accepting the powers that be and knuckling down.



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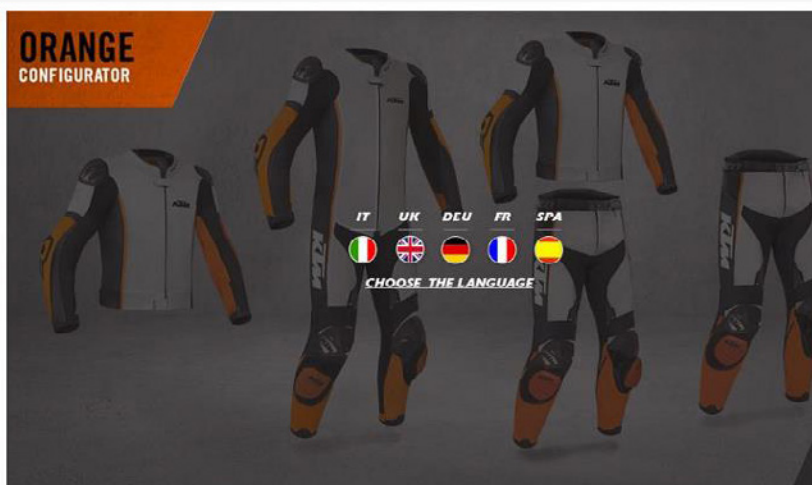
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# INSIDE LINE

**THE ENDLESS CHATTER FROM THE WORLDSBK Paddock SHOW  
OCCASIONALLY GETS LOST IN THE STRONG GUSTS AND PERSISTENT  
WIND AT MOTORLAND – A CIRCUIT BUILT IN 2008-2009 IN THE OPEN  
EXPANSES OF THE ARAGON REGION INLAND FROM CATALUNYA AND  
HOME TO SUPERBIKE SINCE 2011 – BUT IT FEELS LIKE MORE PEOPLE  
NEED TO BE TALKING ABOUT THIS SERIES ANYWAY....**

**By Adam Wheeler (& ropey iPhone pics)  
Photos by GeeBee Images**



The last time I was able to take such a vested interest in the world championship I was sitting on a turfy bank at Brands Hatch and watching Carl Fogarty keep a spellbound audience entertained and patriotic with the kind of spectator numbers that the 500GP FIM competition up the road at Donington Park could only salivate about. How times can change. I thought back to those heydays for Superbike as the Pro-Classic class at Aragon wheeled out their RC30s, OW0s and 916s, and a rider with replica Fogarty Ducati leathers – complete with the white oval on the back with a stark ‘1’ inside still looking very distinctive – walked through the paddock ahead of me to take on the stiff Spanish breeze.

If there is one facet of Superbike has kept consistent from that Shard-like spike in British interest then it is the connection with race fans. As a senior figure from promoters Dorna points out to me during our visit, WorldSBK is being pushed, moulded and positioned as an intimate championship, an accessible and fun series and with more bang for your buck (two races split over two days don't forget and riders on stage show duty all three afternoons).



## **THE PADDOCK SHOW IS A CURIOUS BEAST AND PLAYED OUT TO A GRADUALLY INCREASING AUDIENCE AS THE WEEKEND PROGRESSES...**

Apparently (with the exception of the Italian rounds) an entry ticket also includes access to the paddock; a sought after realm that is largely off limits to general public in Grand Prix.

‘Our championship is a family one and it is about the whole weekend experience,’ opines Dorna Comms & Brand PR Manager Ben Cobb. ‘The paddock show is eight hours worth of entertainment. We want to narrow that gap between the fans and riders and make it as small as possible.’





Like the falsehood of the 'headlight' stickers on the racebike fairings, the misconception is that the discipline is anything less – in performance, nuance or potential – than its cousin MotoGP. Chaz Davies' fastest lap-time in his victorious and stunning second race over virtually-peerless world champion Jonathan Rea was just seven tenths of a second off the MotoGP best at the same circuit six months previously...and that is with a road-based Pirelli profile tyre, not a purpose-built piece of Michelin rubber.

The chrono is just one aspect of a weekend stay at Motorland that reveals the high level that WorldSBK inhabits. Dorna's proactive role towards media attention is almost the opposite of MotoGP where their efforts are more about 'filter and observe'. In Superbike the priority of people like Cobb means the virtual door is thrown open, and to get a grasp of the scope we sign up for the 'Pure Media Experience' and received the run-down on how a WorldSBK fixture is stitched together.



# 0 FEATURE

The 'tour' encompasses looks at Race Direction, Timing, TV broadcast and some time with championship General Manager Dani Carrera. 'Since we arrived in Superbikes our first objective was to differentiate one championship from the other,' he says. 'Here the priority was to bring the paddock as close as possible to the fans and in this sense we have reinforced the paddock show as our principal contact point. It is where the riders pass through to talk to journalists and interact with the public and sign autographs. We have boosted this and invested in it. We'll keep on improving it with more activities.'

'We have also worked with the circuits for other things we can offer that might not be possible in other championships, like small groups of guests drawn at random to experience a race start from the pitlane wall, or have access to the grid or have a lap in the safety car. We have been trying to offer these experiences as much as possible.'

The Paddock Show is a curious beast and played out to a gradually increasing audience as the weekend progresses. The Q+As are fascinating to see the interactions between the various riders but will not hold much worth for media simply because it does not have that intimacy of a post-race debrief in which athletes will be more prone to speaking their mind. For the public it is a crucial glimpse into how the riders carry themselves and come across away from the garage, elusive pitbike or in the sanctuary of their motorhomes.

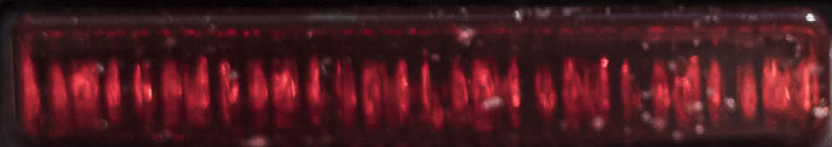
The large stage – surrounded by commercial stands and a Motul-backed eat-erie – also serves as a presentation spot.







# HONDA



*Toni Elster*  
HONDA

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*Journalist Gordon Ritchie: 'The perception of this series does not match the level at which it currently operates. This is an important championship for the factories and at a much higher standard than the fans think in terms of support from the industry. There is not much in it with MotoGP in terms of the scale and even*

*the lap-times now...they keep making it more 'stock' but it gets closer until MotoGP makes another step. This is by far the highest mark of superbike racing in the world and if people don't come [to watch] any more then it is because of the propaganda...'*

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We see the launch of the new FIM World Supersport 300 series at which almost the entire entry somehow squeeze together on the platform and where WorldSBK Sporting Director Gregorio Lavilla speaks eloquently on the much-hyped springboard competition that will see three brands present (with KTM to join in 2018), fourteen nationalities and a full thirty-five rider grid in place. 'This is our first race of a series where we want to give the opportunity for riders to be professional in an affordable way,' the Spaniard says. 'To become Pro you need to learn many things and being here with us at these tracks and in front of the team managers is important; it is also a big thing that the winner will be a world champion.'

'It is important that we start, and then we can progress to performance machines,' he divulged, concerning the evolution of the championship. 'We will be able to see what is the best combination – one cylinder or two – but we also have to be reactive and adaptive to the market; the main goal is to have an affordable class.'

The 300s is the first step in the path that Dorna are calling #roadtoworldsbk and judging by some of the close-runs and incident at Aragon it is likely to be a form of open warfare.

Shortly after, Yamaha showcased their line-up for said 300s and where their youth promotion scheme in European Championship motocross 'Blu Cru' is also being extended into road racing. 'Racing is really part of us and to support it is part of our responsibility,' said Yamaha Motor Europe COO Eric de Seynes. 'MotoGP and winning is great but we also need to think of our future. We need to support the customers that want to race with our bike.'

'In Europe we have more than twenty distributors and it is difficult to have them understand and all involved at the same level in racing...so we decided this is the support we need to do from head office,' he explained on the amplification of 'Blue Cru'.





'Racing is so expensive for parents so it is our responsibility to make it a bit cheaper and the riders can learn to be more professional. We are not doing this just to sell bikes; if the activity was linked to the sales of units then we'd stop tomorrow.'



## BEHIND THE SCENES BEHIND THE SCREENS

Almost ten years old and formerly a designated prize-winner for organisation and infrastructure, Motorland is the epitome of the modern race circuit. In Race Con-

trol there are three levels of staff overseeing every aspect of the WorldSBK fixture; some two hundred workers - twenty in pitlane - and Motorland staff themselves have ten specialists from the gaggle that also includes Dorna staff and FIM officials taking care of everything from medical aspects, track clearance, information relay and general running of the event. 'These people are here from the first lap to the last...they literally close the track,' informs Cobb. 'We have an extremely close relationship with Motorland and they are one of our closest collaborators.' The wall of CCTV monitors means that any accidents or sporting incidents are swiftly communicated and dealt with. Javier Fores' 'flamer' is an example on Saturday when a special degree of attention was needed to deal with the situation. 'We are very happy with the circuit and how Superbike is growing [here],' Dani Carrera said on Sunday when asked about Superbike's prospects at Motorland. 'We think it is an event with a long-term future. We know the local government are also pleased with the impact it is having on the region.'





# 0 FEATURE





## MOTORING

Motorland is perhaps one of the (much-maligned) Herman Tilke's finer motor-sport circuit designs. A hot lap in the back of a Seat Cupra Safety Car is made with the aroma of burning rubber, the protesting squeal of tyres and a screech of engine noise but the overriding sensation (aside from a slight feeling of nausea) is just how much the layout drops and falls-away into tight and then invitingly open corners; there seems little room for misjudgement and for good reason it is classified as one of the more technical challenges on the calendar. Racing can often look like an exact science and matter of routine but some of the images in Aragon show how much it can vary (the wind also assisting the bikes' movement). 'I always like tracks that go up-and-downhill because moving your body around can have an effect,' said Aprilia's Eugene Laverty. 'When you are at a place that is a flat as a pancake then there is not much you can do. I like it...but you do need to have your bike set well because there are many hard-braking areas. If you are pushing the front then you are kinda screwed. If you have a full tank then it can be difficult.'

'The hard thing to judge are braking markers and there are not too many references around here,' #50 adds. 'I always pick up things like where a car has spun off and left a black line; sometimes you find things like that. In Turn 6, which is a kink and we are nearly 'full' around there – I don't know what the driver did but somehow he went off right at that spot and left a perfect reference...I hope he's OK!'

'It is a technical track because there is a lot of elevation and blind entries and downhills, which are more critical on the front: if you enter too fast on a downhill corner then the margin is less to save it,' said Red Bull Honda's Nicky Hayden. 'It is pretty fun. I'd say it is one of the better tracks, it is also big and safe with a couple of good passing zones.'

Perhaps one of the most outstanding features is the mesh between Turn 16 and 17: a double apex lefthander coming off the fantastically fast back straight that then heads uphill and drifts to the finish line. The riders are cranked over for over ten seconds at this point – a real knee and elbow 'wearer'. 'It is a nice corner but it is a tough entry because you are either too early or too late so getting it just right is really difficult,' reveals Laverty. 'I think the high speed makes it difficult to be precise and with the two apexes you can rush past the first. You end up stopping it too much and being too tight in the middle of the track or you go too hot and end up nearly running off the track. The entry dictates a lot of the corner.'

'You never really see the elevation on TV; I've seen footage of tracks and think 'OK, that's flat' but when you get there and see it in person – especially on the bike – then it is completely different,' says Yamaha's Alex Lowes. 'That last corner is quite unique; you come over the crest of that hill and you need to shift right where you crest and the bike is moving. If the bike is working good then it is the most fun corner...apart from the bumps on the way in! It one of my favourites: it is so fast. Apart from the bumps in the way in it is just a good, fun corner. You get a nice feeling of a slide coming out.'



## ALL IN GOOD TIME

In the roomy and bright Timing Office looking over the Aragon finish line and with floor-to-ceiling windows Giorgio Giordani is marshalling three co-workers that break WorldSBK into mathematics. The hardware and software on display is the absolute core of the racing weekend. As any fan will know and have seen on TV graphics, each circuit is split into a series of loops that a machine carrying a transponder will pass through to reveal 'split times' and the overall lap. The system is not GPS based 'because the circuit is covered by cameras with a direct link to race control,' says Giordani. The information is relayed via video signal and thus can be picked up by monitors in garages and hospitalities through the complex. Two computers work in tandem – one solely as a back-up – and from this connection point the timing (that is only certified and branded

by Tissot; they contribute little else) is beamed into the digital grid. 'These days we know the internet is very important so all our information is sent to a web server and can be seen all over the world and broadcasters can put all the data,' Giorgio adds.

Also from this sun-kissed location the Timing Office watches for any jump starters from the grid and have a Lynx camera pointing exactly over the finish line for those close dashes to the flag. 'To catch bikes going at 300kmp/h we need many frames...so with this the position of the transponder is not so important,' says Giordani of the 10,000 frames per second equipment.

In a lull between sessions it seemed like a good idea to ask the Italian where the future of the technology and race timing could venture. 'The future is development of the two-way transponders and the circuit being monitored by more loops, so shorter sectors and to be more concrete on the rider's position,' he offers. 'We also know that having more sectors can





be confusing for riders and especially smaller teams so there are no plans to increase at the moment.'

If two-way information becomes prevalent how will it affect the riders? Giordani: 'We provide the means to access the info in the bike and it is up to the team to decide what to share with the rider for example with regards to lights on the display; the teams are the ones who have to build the cockpits for the riders.'

## FEAST FOR THE EYES

One place where it seems hardware is of the essence is within the TV compound and the OB truck responsible for the live programme. It is here and in this comprehensive facility where Dorna's Media Director David Arroyo gives a thorough overview for what is a sensory overload of information and visuals. The team almost twenty strong is packed inside in their positions with staff responsible for

graphics, replays and a journalistic element that will cut and edit 'moments' to be sent back to Dorna HQ near Barcelona and posted on Facebook and other channels in mere moments. Arroyo reveals that Aragon – the first European round of WorldSBK this season – is hosting five key broadcasters for the first time, is transmitting Friday practice live, installing pitlane reporting and opening an archive facility for TV companies to access whatever slice of action at any key time. A MotoGP-style super slow-mo camera is also in action but not for the live signal. In many ways for Dorna then, Motorland is something of a milestone in their TV output of WorldSBK so far.

A crew of around 65 people are making it all happen and are manning almost twenty cameras across the circuit. The costs of all this is substantial and stem from the fact that the same crew complete the entire calendar, some key staff even working in MotoGP as well. This element ensures there is no discrepancy in the quality from Phillip Island to Qatar.





## THE **BRITISH** QUESTION...

Much has been made of the British 'flavour' of World Superbike and thanks to the prolificacy of riders such as Rea, Davies, Sykes, Laverty, Haslam and so on in recent years. While three of the last four titles have been owned by the UK, curiously there are only three Brits in the list of top ten winners in the series (Fogarty, Rea and Sykes). The trend is currently 'hot' due to the fact that just two races from the past two years have won by a 'non-Brit' (Jordi Torres in 2015 and Nicky Hayden in 2016). Why?

'This has come about because of other work. In England they have a strong national series and it has fed riders here,' says Dani Carrera. 'In Spain there has also been a strong national competition and it has meant a very firm base of talent. Dorna is working on this, and with all the initiatives you see in MotoGP and things like the Asia Talent Cup, British Talent Cup and promotional series'. We are now beginning with the #RoadtoWorldSBK route and this category is the first step: it is quite economical, for youngsters and we want a link with national federations that will see the best at domestic level have a chance the following year to enter the Supersport 300.'

Offering another perspective is Scottish journalist Gordon Ritchie. 'It is just who is fastest at the time and the history involved,' he opines. 'Twenty years ago there were 'factory' systems set-up in Spain to bring kids through and that's what you see now in MotoGP; so many of them are a product of this. Where do the Brits go that cannot fit into MotoGP? They come here, and we are very lucky that there has been a golden generation of British riders that are now plying their trade here but they could have all gone to MotoGP. The problem – if there is a 'problem' – is not that other countries don't want to send their riders here, but they are all obsessed by MotoGP first. It is up to other people to come here and beat the Brits, just as it is for other nationalities to go to MotoGP and beat the Spanish.'









# GENTLEMEN, CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

In an old fashioned duel the weapons to be used would be identical. In motorsport, teammates do get to have the same machinery but quite often the biggest duels take place between rivals with different equipment.

In WorldSBK over the last year or so the big rivalry to emerge has been between Jonathan Rea on the in-line four cylinder 1000cc Kawasaki, now ZX-10RR, and Chaz Davies on the twin cylinder 1199cc Ducati Panigale R. Being on completely different types of race machinery however hasn't stopped the pair having a ding dong on and occasionally off track each weekend.

Last season ended with Davies smarting a bit as Rea sat up on the last lap of the last race in Qatar, allowing his Kawasaki teammate Tom Sykes to pass him on the finish straight to secure second overall in the 2016 Championship ahead of the Welshman. Post race Davies acknowledged that he "saw it coming" and went into the winter confident that he would come out strong at the start of 2017.

Rea on the other hand had been frustrated in the second half of the campaign as he couldn't match the pace of Davies, who notched up six straight wins to close the season as the dominant rider, albeit with Rea as Champion. Jonathan will tell you that he had a bigger prize to look after but I know from speaking to him regularly at the end of last term that he was desperate to put an end to Davies' winning streak each weekend. Ultimately he didn't get there and went into 2017 all guns blazing.

Fast forward to Australia in February and round one of '17 and you would think that there hadn't been a winter break. The two went toe-to-toe at Phillip Island again and traded barbed comments in the post race press scrum.

As I snapped them being interviewed on TV and by the assembled journalists JR mentioned that, as he led the race, he had to be really defensive down the Gardner Straight as Davies had a higher top speed. Chaz broke off from his discussions to sarcastically interject that he had been so much faster that he couldn't get past the Kawasaki. Rea then answered back that he was happy to sit down and look at the time sheets together and discuss it.

And that was that.

In any other form of sport the media would have been banging on about the 'War of Words', but nothing more was said about it. I have mentioned previously that many people inside and out with the WorldSBK paddock would like to see a proper bitter rivalry between a couple of riders; something to get chins wagging and the gossip merchants trading in he said this, he said that fare. Much like F1 and MotoGP over the last few years. But, nothing.



By Graeme Brown



And what of the guys themselves? I spoke to Chaz in the winter about the new race two grid regulations and we touched on the subject of Rea. For sure he has a real inner desire to beat the Kawasaki man but my personal feeling is that there is a genuine respect for what he has achieved since he moved from Honda.

Likewise, Jonathan is very good at choosing his words carefully in a press interview and can drop the odd comment into the conversation that is clearly intended to provoke a reaction. However, I have known him for a long time and I don't think he has a real deep-seated dislike of anyone. For sure he doesn't suffer fools but I don't think there is any real bitter animosity towards anyone.

I have to admit myself that working in the WorldSBK paddock you notice that there are very few riders who are at each other's throats. However, with all sports unless it is the two challenging for the title, no one really cares.

Personally I have a lot of time for both Davies and Rea. I was fortunate enough to have dinner with Chaz on Wednesday night in Alcañiz as we found ourselves in the same restaurant at separate tables ready to pretty much eat alone. I have also known Jonathan since he arrived in the BSB paddock in the UK Red Bull Rookies in 2003 and we now have a very close working relationship.

In having the ability to spend down time with both of them I find them both pretty mature, level headed guys. There doesn't seem to be any petty, 'school boy' style antics from either of them. However, does the WorldSBK Championship need something like that to generate more engagement with fans? In the social media age of celebrity and 'fake news' I sadly have to say yes, most probably. Motorland Aragon last weekend was another opportunity for the press pack to stir the pot as the two traded leather and rubber in the run to the final corner in race two. However, and tellingly, when he got off the bike in parc ferme, Jonathan

was very quick to congratulate Davies and shake his hand.

As far as rivalries go it certainly isn't Rossi/Biaggi, Rossi/Gibernau, Rossi/Lorenzo, Rossi/Marquez (there's a bit of a theme there isn't there?) Or Senna/Prost; Hamilton/Rosberg, Borg/McEnroe. I don't think Davies and Rea will be heading out for dinner together anytime soon but I don't see them having a true dislike for each other. Theirs is, I would suggest, a real race rivalry – on track no quarter is given, but in a safe manner and afterwards the pair accept the results and move on.

The trouble is, it is only this pair that are walking the walk in WorldSBK at the moment. The rest are not quite in the same league. Only their team-mates look like sharing the podium places this year so far. Until someone else is winning races regularly and trading track positions, as well as words, with either Rea or Davies we will need to just accept and enjoy the dispute...and keep the pistols under lock and key for another day.



# belstaff

[www.belstaff.eu](http://www.belstaff.eu)

A leading and elite fashion brand with a distinct stream of motorcycling at its heart sometimes Belstaff's two-wheeled roots can get lost in the celebrity endorsements and exaggerated pricing. There is still much to admire in this company that started life in England and in the thriving riding/racing scene of the 20s-30s and has such a deep history. They have a dedicated 'Pure Motorcycling' collection outside of their 'Legends' range of leather goods. The Classic TT four-pocket motorcycle jacket will cost around 600 euros and comes in black or racing red for ladies. Among other options as well as boot and trouser items we like the Crosby motorcycle jacket (495 euros), and the Brooklands Blouson (550 euros) are cool non-leather products (antique 8oz waxed cotton); the latter coming in black and brown. Sharp design, excellent build quality and CE certified safety standards means that Belstaff cannot be ignored when it comes to coat/jacket options for on the bike or off.











## leatt

Leatt kindly sent one of their GPX off-road lids through the post in the last couple of weeks and actually having the product to hand allows full appreciation for the impressive piece of kit it really is.

The 360 turbine system is the main ingredient for two versions of the helmet – the 6.5 carbon (600 dollars) and the 5.5 composite (450). The specs of the 6.5 feature ten turbines made of Armourgel (a Leatt employee wrapped his hand in the stuff and smashed it with a hammer in a memorable demonstration last summer) and a (typical for Leatt) innovation and emphasis on safety by claiming the GPX ‘helps with brain and rotation safety and reduces the head impact at concussion level by up to 30% and the rotational acceleration to the head and brain by up to 40%. The helmet is also equipped with a breakaway visor that reduces rotation in a crash.’

The helmet feels smaller and lighter than most (we have Arai, Lazer and Fox also to hand) and with that kind of testing research and technology within the liner then it is easy to reach for the Leatt first when it comes to ride.

Although it was arguably something of an Achilles heel on the helmet’s launch the latest raft of designs of the GPX are much more modern and appealing. The 6.5 feature on this page is our main pick but there are at least twenty variations of the models on the website.







**AMA-SX**

# SEATTLE

**CENTURYLINK FIELD · APRIL 8th**

450SX winner: Marvin Musquin, KTM

250SX West Coast winner: Aaron Plessinger, Yamaha





# ALL SQUARE









‘It was a big enough crash to where something could have got tweaked or jacked up. The bike could have been not in a good spot, so fortunately I was able to get up and go,” said Monster Kawasaki’s Eli Tomac about his big endo in Seattle this past weekend that was round fourteen of the Monster Energy Supercross series. And that’s understating the crash a bit! The fact that Tomac, on the charge from outside the top ten, was able to a) get up from his crash and b) the bike wasn’t tweaked and c) the bike fired up right away was all pretty amazing.

And amazing would also cover his ride before and after that crash as he used a couple of sections to triple and pass some of the world’s best riders. Yeah, his five race winning streak was stopped but the runner-up spot allowed him to tie Red Bull KTM’s Ryan Dungey for the 450SX points lead with three races left. Tomac had passed Monster Yamaha’s Cooper Webb for third in the main when Webb, the feisty rider he is, went right back at the #3 and stuffed him in a turn which Tomac admitted stopped his momentum a bit. Regrouping behind the Yamaha rider, Tomac cut inside on a double, came up short and over the bars he went. The entire series could’ve changed right there and then but fortunately for Kawasaki and Tomac it didn’t.

Tomac’s opening laps were straight out of a desperate man’s playbook as he realized that he needed to get into the front ASAP. The risks he took were huge and when he got into fourth he said he realized that surprisingly, Dungey wasn’t one of the three riders in front of him. Dungey had fallen in the first turn and started out dead-last. Like Daytona, Ryan was forced on a tough track to make a ton of passes (although not as gnarly as Tomac) to end up fourth at the checkers, which is what he did at Daytona as well. It’s hard to quantify which ride was better, which one showed more heart or talent as the only two riders in the 450SX class

that had something to lose with poor starts or crashes suffered just those fates.

Meanwhile out front it was the Frenchman Marvin Musquin who didn’t jump any unexpected triples or quads, pulled a start and then using superior technique and momentum, just pulled away for his second win this year and second of his career.



‘You’ve got to be smart and look everywhere for new lines and small insides,’ Musquin told me after about making a disastrous track look smooth. “If it’s so rutted sometimes you don’t have to go outside and you can just go inside because you don’t need speed on tracks like that sometimes. So it was a great day. Second fastest. I was able to win the heat race in front of Dungey, a good battle, and in the Main get in the lead in the first lap, which was awesome. With it clear in front of me I was able to pick my lines and look behind, just like Dallas.”



There was lots of talk about Musquin catching and passing Dungey late in two races this year and essentially taking four points from Dungey in the title. In Seattle the way Tomac was charging up, Musquin's ride allowed KTM to hold onto the red points leader plate (shared with Tomac) for at least one more race. Afterwards, Musquin admitted that going forward he'll be aware of the title chase and what Dungey needs. 'I want KTM to win the championship. That's normal. Me and Ryan, we're really close. We train together,' Musquin stated. "Right now I'm not able to fight for the championship anymore, so I'm just trying to win. Obviously if Ryan's behind me and faster than me I'm not try everything to hold him. That's normal. Other than that tonight I really wanted to win. For myself but also because Dungey was not in the top three, so obviously it would have been three points if Tomac would have got around me. So I think it was good for KTM that I won tonight.'

Rockstar Husqvarna's Jason Anderson returned to the podium with a good ride that he admitted was a bit lucky with so many mishaps on the rutty track. Webb qualified fastest in the abbreviated practice session, won the second 450SX heat race of his career and was in podium spot for much of the main before he went down. It was a welcome return to the land of front runners for Webb who hadn't been the same guy upon returning from a shoulder injury.

'It definitely was a shitty feeling at first, but I knew I needed to get healthy,' said Webb of having to sit out a month. 'I think now my shoulder is 100%. I don't think it was quite 100%, but I just wanted to be racing and learning. I had some unfortunate little crashes in the mains and stuff like that, but I was off too. So it wasn't like I was straight up getting twelfths, but still it's definitely a big step in the right direction tonight.'

In the 250SX class it was Star Yamaha's Aaron Plessinger that took the win with a ride that was on another level from everyone else. Both

times! There was a red flag thrown a few laps into the main where Plessinger was leading but no matter, the second start saw him grab the lead from GEICO Honda's Jimmy Decotis and take off. It was the first win of the season for Plessinger who we've seen really excel in crappy track conditions. Before Aaron took motocross seriously he was an accomplished off-road racer, following in the footsteps of his father Scott. When no one wants to hit the track, there's Aaron drooling over the possibilities of going fast.

'When it's like this, when it's soft and rutty the real me shines,' Aaron said after the race. 'I don't know what it is. My dad always told me in the ruts or in the mud the faster you go the easier it is. That's what I do every time. I'm used to it I guess because the GNCC's. It's just me I guess.'

Plessinger knows this hasn't been an ideal year for him but second in the points is testament to just how good he is, even with 2017 being called a 'disappointment' by some. 'My starts have had everything to do with that (his so-so season). The one time I did get a good start in Oakland I got taken out. But it happens. I've been pumped with my riding, but the starts just haven't been there.'

Points leader Justin Hill of the Monster Pro Circuit rode safely to second and lost three off his lead to Plessinger. That gap stands at 18 with two races to go. Third place was TLD KTM's Mitchel Oldenburg who passed the going-for-it Decotis late in the race to get his first ever podium.

But afterwards all anyone could talk about was the 450SX race and fight for the title. The green machine and the 'machine' known as Ryan Dungey are going to take this thing down to the wire. On a night where anything could happen and sometimes did, the two riders that are at the top of the standings showed everyone exactly why they are there. Great night of racing and let's take this to Las Vegas.









A third podium finish of the season was welcomed by Jason Anderson (right)...particularly after having occupied fourth place on no less than six occasions...





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## fly racing

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Temperatures are creeping up – certainly in Europe – and riders might now be looking more towards cooler or ventilated gear for riding in the coming months. A sound option would be Fly Racing's 2017.5 Kinetic Mesh Racewear: shown here in several different schemes. The Americans are confident that the breathability of their durable mesh panel design is the ideal option for warmer conditions and boasts the strength and performance of the Kinetic range in three different designs. Also keep a look out for the official Rockstar Energy liveries.

Fly are almost twenty years in existence and their ride-wear keeps moving from strength to strength.

[www.flyracing.com](http://www.flyracing.com)

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# REED'S CHAPTER AND VERSE...

What a season it's been for us observers. The flip flop of the narratives from week to week has been something else. Just when you feel confident enough in something to stamp it, the riders or series shows you something to make you look for the eraser asap...

Of course, all of this goes down with the #94 Honda rider Ken Roczen on the sidelines after winning the first two races. What could have been had Roczen been able to stay upright? Then again, maybe it would've been a runaway while first Tomac, then Dungey, hit some lulls and tried to figure things out.

A tale of two series, the first month dominated by 'what in the heck is wrong with Tomac?' as he not only couldn't get any wins, he faded backwards in a couple of races. The meeting that claimed Roczen might have been the worst of his Kawasaki career as he simply couldn't get going at the back of the top ten.

The last little while we've been seeing Dungey fade and his once wondrous starts have gone

MIA as well. Dungey's tallying his 'most races finishing off the podium' amount in three years. Having been around a race team or two in my time, the starts going away and the confidence robbing results are very much related. Dungey's very human in 2017 and that's a weird thing to see.

Every 450 title Dungey's ever won has seen him cruise home without much adversity so it should be interesting to see how he reacts to a dogfight to the end. He's never been tested like this outside of the years when Ryan Villopoto ended up top-ping him indoors and out. Last week didn't bode well for Dungey when coming up on Monster Yamaha's Chad Reed he kind of froze-up when Reed wouldn't get out of the main line in retaliation

for Dungey's comments after the heat race they had together. Once the 22 did move over and Dungey got by, he actually got passed back by Davi Millsaps who he was lapping. Dungey's going to need to buckle-up and show something he hasn't for over a month now to stop Tomac from getting his first 450SX title because Eli, as he showed in Seattle, is the fastest man in super-cross right now.

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He's not in the title fight but leave it to Reed to make an impact in this series good or bad. As mentioned above, in St Louis Reed put himself squarely in the crosshairs with Dungey catching Tomac in the main and Reed not moving over upon getting lapped. The FIM race director saw what we all saw and took away Reed's points from the main event and fined him \$5000 for his ignoring of the lapper flags.

Reed spoke to the media this week and held firm to the point that he saw the blue flags but didn't see Dungey close enough



By Steve Matthes



to move over for and he's going to appeal the race directors decision. Dungey and Reed had a clear the air meeting before Seattle to talk about what happened. 'Dungey and I are fine. Even before that I was fine with him,' Reed told me. 'I've said all those same things that he said last week. I'd be living in a glasshouse if I was mad at his comments or something like that. I understand the situation all too well. No issue there. I have an issue with a few 'Dungey members', but not Ryan.' Reed's alluding to Ryan's brother coming down on the floor and wanting to take the issue to the next level. Dungey was upset after a heat race battle between the two and said on the TV broadcast that Reed was trying to take him out and was pulling some 'immature' moves but Reed claims he never heard those comments.

'I raced him hard. Obviously to win a heat race is good. It gives you first pick at the gate. It's a healthy bonus. I don't even know what it is but I believe it's around the same as what you get for a main event win,' Reed continued.

"It's better than a sharp stick in the eye, so I was racing him hard. We were parked indoors last weekend, so none of the satellites worked so I was kind of oblivious (to Dungey's comments) to be honest. I didn't know he made those comments. So I just think people read between the lines way too much, assumed way, way too much.'

Excuse me while I take a moment to tell the Easter bunny what Reed said about not hearing those comments. Nevertheless, Reed feels he's a victim of a personal issue with John Gallagher, the FIM Race Director, and it started with Reed getting the black flag at Anaheim few years ago for throwing an elbow to Trey Canard who had landed on him and caused a crash. 'I think that as the oldest guy out here and the most experienced I hope that I can make a stance and we can implement a rulebook that is consistent with every other professional racing series in the world. We don't need rules that contradict themselves five times over. I believe that there needs

to be situations that don't need calls to be made so fast. I believe there needs to be a race panel. MotoGP, Formula 1, motocross. If you want to get out and get into a better scenario, let's start doing things right. Let's act professional. I don't think we're there.'

'I really feel that this is an individual that has an issue with me. I'm not okay with that. I believe it's clear that the black flag situation was unsustainable. You could never, ever keep up with that. Key word being that he said it was retaliation. It was nothing more than probably the weakest, lamest elbow that I've ever given anyone. It was more of a 'what's up? Why'd you jump on me?'

'At the end of the day I don't have an issue with Ryan Dungey. I really don't. Him and I talked to today and I'm good with it. I'm good with him. The FIM thing is a different situation.' This series has had a little bit of everything but with Reed now coming in with these strong words, we're about maxed out in storylines I'd say.







MXGP MEXICO

# UNMOVABLE

Photos by Ray Archer

Back to Europe finally for MXGP  
after four different flyaway  
events but Tim Gajser remains  
in control









Magic Mexico again for Thomas Covington in MX2 (left) but can the American reproduce the same form on European soil?

MXGP MEXICO

A race crash led to Clement Desalle exercising restraint in Mexico; the Belgian will be one of several riders to grow in strength and pace in the European element of MXGP. Romain Febvre (left) has plenty to think about to find his podium form once more on the factory Yamaha

Magic Mexico again for Thomas Covington in MX2 (left) but can the American reproduce the same form on European soil?

MXGP MEXICO

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MXGP MEXICO

A race crash led to Clement Desalle exercising restraint in Mexico; the Belgian will be one of several riders to grow in strength and pace in the European element of MXGP. Romain Febvre (left) has plenty to think about to find his podium form once more on the factory Yamaha



Rui Gonçalves chews the roost in what was a particularly bewildering set of conditions at Leon for the fourth Mexican Grand Prix in the city





MXGP MEXICO









MXGP MEXICO







Eighth position overall at a circuit where he was a formerly runner-up still marked a best so far for Max Nagl for what has been an understated start to 2017



MXGP MEXICO







**COLDENHOFF**





CAIROLI

# ANSR

17.5 SINCRON



# NOT SO JUNIOR...

So Tim Gajser is pretty unstoppable at the moment. Utter domination of the past two rounds in Argentina and Mexico and across two very different tracks means that the World Champion is hitting a stride, and the next Grand Prix at Arco di Trento will not only represent a return to the venue where he celebrated his very first GP victory in 2015 (it still doesn't seem that long ago and look what he has won since...) but should see the Pietramurata circuit awash with yellow and red and the ever-growing band of Slovenian supporters.

It doesn't look too promising for Gajser's rivals, even if Arco is the first of two home events for Tony Cairoli.

The results sheets this year compared to 2016 vary only slightly but from what I have seen Tim is - naturally - an improved force on the factory Honda. The twenty year old (wow) seems more at home in his own skin as the premier competitor for the biggest bike manufacturer in the world, a representative of one of the most renowned gear makers and of course the top dog at the very

highest level of this sport internationally. Gajser has learned to live with the extra fuss and commitments that split good riders from championship winning riders. And while everything looks the same on the outside - this is his fourth year in Honda colours - #243 also faced a third consecutive season of change. In 2015 there was the evolution to race winner and title contender in his second full term in MX2, 2016 he jumped into MXGP and this year his Gariboldi set-up converted into the principal framework for the HRC operation: effectively changing places with

Paolo Martin's infrastructure with the Italian now overseeing the MX2 programme.

On the bike it is hard to identify any of Gajser's weak points - he is a good starter, fiercely fit, gels immaculately with the CRF450RW and has a sprint tactic in the motos that frequently breaks anything his peers can offer - but there is still the overriding feeling that Gajser operates in a 'team within a team'. This thought reoccurred to me upon repeated viewing of Tim's intense and fairly unapproachable father Bogo in the TV pictures of last week's Grand Prix of Mexico.

A 'son-and-overbearing-father' is one of those puzzling dynamics that has littered motocross for years, with tales of success and sentimentality but also a few horror stories. It doesn't seem to be the case so much in road racing but perhaps the complexity of teams' structure and technical requirements mean external personnel are marginalised more compared to MX, where a father would have adjusted a bike's set-up for



By Adam Wheeler



his son or daughter from an early age and for a sustained period of time. In motocross the family link or collaboration is longer and deeper it but that doesn't necessarily mean it is conducive to progress. I recall sitting in the press room at the Sam Boyd Stadium in Las Vegas for the first Monster Energy Cup in 2011 and during practice for the Amateur Class a guy dressed in a Suzuki team shirt – and clearly a relative of a kid on track – was cursing, shouting and even banging the table at one stage for the ineffectiveness he was witnessing on the stadium floor below him: I'm sure the kid was enjoying his weekend immensely after the practice debrief. As a father myself – and one who wishes nothing but happiness for my children rather than a slice of immortality as a sporting hero – I felt it was all a bit too much.

In the case of the Gajser family it is clear that Bogo has been nothing short of instrumental in his son's rapid ascension to 'top dog' of MXGP as mentor, guide and trainer: the definition of a real motocross family (Gajser's older brother is his training partner and assistant). At

the age of twenty, professionally successful with two world championships in two years, almost a national celebrity at home and seemingly very happy in his relationship it is hard to see where his father continues to fit into the picture and it is odd to witness a works HRC rider and defending No.1 so dutiful and enrapt to one man's instructions and ever-presence. Where Tim goes, his father is almost always there. It is a partnership that has clearly worked and although it has made for awkward moments in the working ways for Honda (and especially now with Giacomo Gariboldi's team essentially the whole platform for HRC in Grand Prix and graduating from the small but well-supported squad it was before) for the trio of Gajzers to change their approach could knock something out of how #243 goes racing.

I do wonder how the Gajzers and HRC will continue to click together as more spoils arrive and contract discussions inevitably take place. During the summer of 2015 Honda were convinced that Tim would run another year in MX2 – title or not – and even made a public declaration

to that intent. In a few rapid weeks in the winter and after championship celebrations the decision to jump straight into MXGP was made. With Gajser now installing himself as one of the very best motocrossers in the world and with him and his father wielding the power that comes with this status, when will the oft-stated desire to enter supercross rear once more? Perhaps late or unexpectedly enough to throw Honda's planning for Grand Prix into a spin? After all, Tim and his father might have ushered in a new golden age for the brand in the premier class but there is more to #243's gains than just a concentrated and closed family effort – there is a whole crew of technicians and the might of one of the most powerful racing divisions in the world creating the vein of form we are seeing in MXGP at present.

Motocross is often broken down into simple terms: man, machine, obstacles and two motos. But the mesh of personalities, politics, diplomacy and team-play involved behind-the-scenes means that the presence of greatness is as obfuscated as any other sport.





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## answer

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Take a glance at the videos or images of any of the 2017 MXGP events in Qatar, Indonesia, Argentina or Mexico and you'll easily be able to catch Answer's new Synchron gear as worn by the factory Red Bull KTM team of Tony Cairoli and Glenn Coldenhoff. As the Americans themselves claim 'if you are looking for performance racewear at an affordable price then look no further'.

In seven different guises and two designs the Synchron is an attractive mid-point price target for riders and the endorsement by the KTM duo means that the gear does not fall down in the quality department. Prices come in at: Shirt (26 dollars), pants (80 dollars) and gloves (20 dollars). The jersey's 'main fabrics have been changed to mesh panels to allow for optimal ventilation. Tiny-hole perforated mesh-fabric increases airflow. Sublimated interlock polyfabric construction. Comfortable self-fabric V-neck collar design. Oversize raglan sleeve pattern.' The pants also use multiple panels and a durable Poly Oxford fabric construction. The gloves are all about stretch fabrics and a light internal palm padding to help with those blisters.

As usual Answer also hit the mark when it comes to the design and aesthetic.

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# DEFEND YOUR VISION

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► PAULS JONASS







**0** **FEATURE**

# SEVA

## TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

By Adam Wheeler, Portraits by JP Acevedo, action by Ray Archer







**0** FEATURE





**VSEVOLOD BRYLYAKOV IS UNINTENTIONALLY ANNOYING. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME WE'VE INTERVIEWED THE LIKEABLE RUSSIAN FOR THE MAGAZINE – ON THIS OCCASION PERCHED OUT THE BACK OF HIS TEAM'S PITBOX IN QATAR AS OPPOSED TO THE PADDOCK OF A SUPERCROSS RACE WHERE THEN 21 YEAR OLD WAS EXPECTING TO HIT 2016 MX2 HARD – AND HE'S STILL TO TRANSLATE HIS OBVIOUS SPEED AND POTENTIAL TO RESULTS. 'SEVA' WAS ULTIMATELY HAMSTRUNG LAST YEAR – HIS FIRST ON THE MONSTER ENERGY KX250F – BY A SERIES OF SMALL INJURIES THAT PULLED THE TIPS OF HIS FINGERS GRADUALLY AWAY FROM MORE PODIUM TROPHIES IN THE CLASS...**

*"I think I am the most aggressive guy on a bike out there and I get fired-up so quick..."*

**W**atching the Brylyakov around the racetrack is to observe a bundle of energy, almost desperation. There is fantastic pace...but to the point of nervous angst. If the otherwise calm and eloquent athlete away from the motorcycle could focus and harness his charge then Russia would be toasting far more podium appearances and even – whisper it now – an outside shot of title contention.

Three terms in MX2 and Brylyakov still has work to do. Usually tackling his vocation single-handedly and without the presence of an entourage, family or assistance he made an important decision for 2017 by deciding to listen to the advice and wisdom of former MXGP winner Brian Jorgensen. With the flyaway dates of the FIM World Championship now in the past – and #18 taking a promising sixth place in Mexico to

hint at more to come – the partnership could bear considerable fruit once the European stage of the season begins. Brylyakov already turned heads with the fastest MX2 lap-times in Qatar Timed Practice and Warm-up but impatience and errors in the motos means the latency was not evident in black and white on papers afterwards.

You could argue that he is wading through one of the most exciting times in his career by being on the precipice of making a special impact. He should also share copious billing with Evgeny Bobryshev in MXGP's return to Russia for the first time in half a decade at Orlyonok in June (and in the absence of Alex Tonkov in MXGP with the former works Yamaha and Husqvarna rider mired in visa issues). But the clock is





ticking and Kawasaki are watching. He has this year and 2018 to really stamp his name on the Grand Prix scene before needing to think about MXGP.

**Seva, how are you placed to tackle this season? What's going on with you right now?**

I have put an incredible amount of work in for this season and almost starting from zero because of all the injuries. I've been working on fitness, the technique, the speed and some testing. We have changed my preparation and I wanted to start the season without rushing things and just trying to enjoy racing...it has been difficult to keep myself calm! I had my first Pole time in Qatar and it was

difficult; I got pretty nervous and it ended up going wrong in the Heat.

**Now you finally seem to have some guidance...**

In any relationship with any new person I begin with trust. The main decision for me was starting to work with Brian Jorgensen and you have to invest in a call like that. You have to invest in your future and the decision to work with Brian also meant letting him work on me and make my testing. He was actually the one who brought me to the physical tests and looked at my technique and organised my stay in Spain in pre-season. I was quite an organised guy anyway and never needed someone to kick my ass to work





but he put my will to work in the right direction and we looked at the exact things that I needed to ride a motorbike...not just be super-fit and hit everything like a hammer. It was good stuff. A lot of training and not much free time...and I enjoyed it. I got a routine and it became my life. I was happy. I know what I am working for and now I can see how it pays off.

**You showed flashes of speed last year but it must have been frustrating not being fully fit or not hitting some kind of momentum...**

That's true and last year started well but after Mexico it went very wrong for me. My preparation went worse and we lacked possibilities. There are always little 'failures' because you cannot be successful every time but it is important to take something from those experiences and in the end I was thinking 'this is the

season where you really need to take all this onboard and remember the good things'. There is never a chance to settle because everyone is working for.

**It seems you have made the step physically but mentally there is still some work to do...**

Yeah, of course, you can always work, even on the physical side but perhaps moreso on the mental side. But it is coming because I know it is about believing in yourself. I still like playing with the bike but I feel more focussed and that's another good point about working with Brian. I need to take more care of getting over-excited! These first four flyaways are about keeping solid and taking what I can.



## **How do you feel about MX2? It's an open book?**

Is it an open book...but in previous seasons I wasn't trying to chase or follow a particular rider. I've said it in the past but I've never looked at the names; it is something my Dad taught me: there are no 'names' at the track. You might like someone's style but as soon as you reach the level of Pro then it is all about what you do, your style and how others look at you. Not the other way around.

## **But isn't it good to study the opposition?**

We've raced most of these guys for quite a long time already so it is mostly the new kids from EMX and they are quite crazy! They need more experience...and I speak from my own season of going a bit wild last year. You pass some of them and you can see they are way-over the limit. You know where the others are good and what they can do but I don't need to think about them...

## **So, a big Grand Prix for you coming up in June...even though it is far away do you still think about it?**

Of course! And people don't let me forget about it...! Also I know some people in the paddock are worried about heading to Russia – which makes me feel a bit strange! I'm being asked about hotels, flights and the area all the time so it is hard to forget that it's coming up. For sure I'll have all my family and friends there and I think it is amazing that Grand Prix comes back to Russia. I'm looking forward to every race but this one will be special.



## **Are you ready for the spotlight because the spectator turnout at Semigorge in 2012 was huge...**

Yeah! I hope the same lot of people will come! And I will have to cover myself with something to get from the team to the track. Seriously though it will be fun and it is exciting to imagine how it will be. I think we will also be going back there again because when the Russians decide to do something then they do it well! I have big hopes for this GP.

## **It'll be nice to have that home GP feeling...**

Yes...but Latvia felt a little bit that way because there were people coming to Kegums. I think the Russian GP will be different and fans will travel from quite far away to be there. It has been five years now. I still remember Semigorje and there were a lot of people. I have a lot of hopes: for the track, the attendance. I know the venue and I think they have some work to do to push it to GP standard. I think they will do a good job.



NEXT STEPS: VSEVOLOD BRYLYAKOV









The image shows the front left portion of a BMW R1200GS Rallye Sport motorcycle. The bike is parked on a rocky, uneven surface. The front wheel, with a knobby tire and a multi-spoke rim, is prominent. The BMW logo is visible on the front fairing. The background consists of a calm body of water and a range of rugged, mountainous hills under a clear sky.

BMW R1200GS RALLYE SPORT

# THE STATES-MAN?

Words by Roland Brown, Photos by Markus Jahn & Jörg Künstle





**HALF-WAY UP A STEEP, LOOSE-SURFACED TRACK IN SOUTHERN SPAIN, MY OFF-ROAD RIDING ABILITY REACHES ITS LIMITS AND THE R1200GS RALLYE COMES TO A HALT IN A DEEP RUT, THE BOXER'S STICKING-OUT CYLINDERS PREVENTING FURTHER PROGRESS AS THE KNOBBLY-TYRED REAR WHEEL SPINS HOPELESSLY IN A SHOWER OF SAND AND STONES....**

It's vivid proof that even the Rallye isn't unbeatable, although on this occasion the bike is soon on the move again with the help of frantic paddling by me, a shove from a helpful fellow rider, and the cleverness of its multi-adjustable traction control system. What this big blue boxer is, according to BMW, is the sportiest series production model yet from the family of dual-purpose flat-twins that traces its line all the way back to the original R80G/S that began the adventure bike craze in 1980.

The R1200GS itself was launched in 2004, when its striking style, punchy 1170cc engine and lightened chassis (over the previous R1150GS) forged a two-wheeled phenomenon whose success shows no sign of slowing. Several updates and well over a quarter of a million sales later, both the standard boxer and its heavily kitted-out Adventure sibling are still topping big-bike sales

charts in many countries including the UK, where they took the top two places last year.

The GS has always been handy off-road for such a tall, heavy machine, as countless round-the-world adventurers and off-road school pupils would confirm. And now the boxer's popularity has encouraged BMW to push it further in that direction, with the R1200GS Rallye. Its blue paintwork brings to mind the exotic, tuned and telescopic-forked HP2 that took the boxer's off-road ability to new heights a decade ago, but the Rallye is a much more down-to-earth model with a standard engine and Telelever front suspension layout.

Differences from the standard R1200GS include a lower sports screen, wider off-road footrests and a white single seat. The basic Rallye model also wears hand-guards, wire stone-guards for its



BMW R1200GS RALLYE SPORT



radiators, and plastic frame protectors. It comes with Adventure style cross-spoke wire wheels that can be fitted with either road- or off-road biased tyres at no extra charge.

Few riders are likely to order the Rallye in that basic form, because its off-road potential only really becomes apparent with the optional Riding Modes Pro, which adds two Enduro settings to the standard Road and Rain modes; and with an upgrade from the basic ASC traction control to the more sophisticated Dynamic Traction Control. In reality most riders will opt for the higher specification Rallye Sport, which includes those options plus LED headlight and indicators,









BMW R1200GS RALLYE SPORT







heated grips, tyre pressure warning, Hill Start Control and a gearbox quick-shifter. The Rallyes on the Spanish launch were all Sport models and also featured crash-bars, an aluminium bash-plate, and the optional Sport suspension package, comprising stiffer, longer springs at both ends.

They also included the latest version of Dynamic ESA, BMW's semi-active suspension system. Instead of the previous push-button method of adjusting shock preload, ESA now monitors the bike's load and automatically adjusts preload to suit.

It's a clever system that worked very well on the launch route's varied surfaces,

ranging from sand to tarmac via a network of stony, often bumpy tracks. The big blue boxer punched its way through everything, its power delivery strong yet refined, and its dirt-optimised traction control system allowing some sliding while finding improbable levels of grip. The bi-directional quick-shifter was also very useful on dirt, especially in the way that it allowed easy, clutchless down-shifts when I was standing up on the footrests.

Off-road chassis performance was excellent, aided by the BMW's longer, firmer springs and the way the Dynamic ESA continually adjusted damping rates to suit the location and speed.



## BMW R1200GS RALLYE SPORT



It seamlessly softened the settings when I was cautiously picking my way down a rutted path, reassured by the Enduro ABS brake system's ability even on dirt; then it firmed up the rear when I accelerated along a dirt track, the rear end stepping out controllably under power thanks to the traction control system's finely judged assistance.

At times I was still very aware that the Rallye was a big, tall bike that weighs over 250kg, but it was remarkably controllable, ably assisted by knobbly Metzeler Karoo III tyres that are a logical choice despite their relatively poor and fast-wearing performance on the road. Smoother tyres such as Metzeler's Tourance Nexts would improve roadgoing performance but wouldn't allow the Rallye to demonstrate its full off-road ability.

Nope, the R1200GS Rallye can be a stylish and very capable streetbike, but it only makes sense for riders who are planning to get that blue paint dirty on a regular basis. It's not the R1200GS for every rider, or even for most. But for those who want a boxer that thrives on mud or dirt, the R1200GS Rallye is not just the sportiest but the best series production model of that dual-purpose boxer family that now stretches back more than 35 years.





# indian

[www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk](http://www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk)

From the four new jackets in the Indian spring/summer collection then our pick has to be the two sportier options with the Scout and 1901; the latter in particular with the red panelling and striped sleeves a nice tie-in with the launch of the Flat Track season ahead. The 1901 has a 93% polyester build (water resistant and breathable) with 7% nylon, a snap fasten collar, zip cuffs and woven sleeve patches. At the same price of 126 pounds the Scout is 100% polyester. A pair of enticing coats for riding or out in the street but the rest of the Indian range is just as captivating and it is worth a tempting cruise around their online store.





*Indian*  
SCOUT







## BACK PAGE

Photo by  
Ray Archer











'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focussed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP.

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